

From: Wendy Rainbird [wendyra@webone.com.au]
Sent: Tuesday, 11 April 2006 4:50 PM
To: Committees
Subject: ACT as UNESCO Biosphere
To Dr Hannath Jaireth,
Committee Secretary,
Standing Committee on Planning and Environment,
ACT Legislative Assembly.

Dear Dr Jaireth and Committee members,
Below is a pasted copy of my submission to the Standing Committee about the proposal that the ACT apply to be a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.
Sincerely,
Wendy Rainbird.

ACT BIOSPHERE RESERVE PROPOSAL

Submission by Wendy Rainbird.

Management of the nomination process

During 2002 the Nature and Society Forum, which is a broad -based community non-government organisation, submitted a proposal to the ACT Government that the Australian Capital Territory be nominated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The Nature and Society Forum (NSF) is committed to improving the health and well-being of people and society and their understanding of their place in the natural world. Its founders include Professor Stephen Boyden and its patron Professor Frank Fenner. Stephen Boyden was a UNESCO consultant to the Man and Biosphere Program between 1972 and 1989, and he worked on the Hong Kong metabolism project. Another member of the NSF Management committee is Ian Anderson who was a Secretary General of the Australian National Commission for UNESCO, and he reported that since the Seville Conference there has been a focus towards sustainable urban development.

The role of such members of the NSF in the management of the nomination process needs to be acknowledged.

Status and boundaries of the core, transition and buffer zones

In the NSF proposal, it was stated that the ACT has a close match of land management structure, with the **core protected area** matching Namadgi National Park, and its proximity to Kosciuszko National Park, and the need to protect the ACT Water Catchment; the **buffer zone** of the ACT forests and farmlands, and the Nature Reserves of Tidbinbilla, Murrumbidgee River corridor, Canberra Nature Park and Gigerline. Then there is the match with the **area of transition/cooperation** of the Canberra urban area, which already has a policy for sustainability in the document ³People Place Prosperity². Various reports and plans, like the ACT Natural Resource Management Plan, the Canberra Plan with the Canberra Spatial Plan, The Canberra Social Plan, the Economic White Paper, and Shaping Our Territory Options and Opportunities for Non-Urban ACT are all relevant to the proposal, and could support a firm basis for the ACT as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Funding needs and sources

Like the Landcare movement in Australia, in which businesses have now become financial supporters, then it is feasible and important for businesses to be financial supporters, especially as more businesses see that it is their responsibility too to take actions about sustainable living. There are marketing opportunities for businesses as

supporters of the ACT and the nation's Capital, as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Increasingly, philanthropic organisations in Australia envisage their role for supporting initiatives for the public good. These businesses and other organisations, as well as government could be sources of funding for regional, national and international sustainability initiatives, projects and promotion.

The role of Canberra as the nation's centre where decisions are made which affect all Australians should be developed as a positive, and where leadership for sustainability is demonstrated.

Engaging stakeholders

As living sustainably is everyone's business, and because there is abundant evidence that changes are required to live more sustainably, it is vital that the community, government, non-government organisations, institutions, professional institutions and businesses are involved.

Engagement across sectors, needs to be creative and imaginative, as well as soundly based on evidence. Rather than talkfests, the planning and the educational aspects need to involve workshops which outline the key points relevant to the advantages of being a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve; and which identify, celebrate, map, illustrate and harness the natural, cultural and human resources of the region through participatory learning activities.²(page 4 of NSF Canberra Bush Capital Biosphere Reserve UNESCO Nomination Proposal).

The educational aspects need to be built in to the development of the proposal.

At the Conference-workshops Making Canberra Sustainable² run by Manning Clark House in October 2005, Bryan Furnass (another NSF member), stated that behind its pleasant facade lies the fact that Canberra's per capita energy consumption is about 50 times greater than that of many developing nations, that our water consumption and waste generation is the highest in the world and that our surrounding life-support systems of soil, water supplies and biodiversity are being steadily eroded. If our city is to remain a sustainable and pleasant place to live for ourselves and our descendants, we will all, collectively_ government, business and ordinary citizens_ need to make radical changes to our consciousness and ways of living.²(page 9, Making Canberra Sustainable, Dec 2005).

The educational and advocacy role that the ACT as a UNESCO Biosphere Capital can provide nationally will be significant, and would support the proposed Australian National Sustainability Complex. Indeed they would be mutually supportive in demonstrating net positive designing for the built environment, for communication about what is working in regions around Australia that is truly ecologically sustainable, and for educating across sectors.

Communication strategies and activities

Communication strategies need to be built in to the whole project, and properly funded. They need to be inclusive and across sectors: community, government and non-government, and especially businesses. Professional groups like the building, architectural and engineering group, the Australian Green Development Forum, and many other businesses that are developing eco-innovative designs or products need to be involved.

Communication needs to engage members of the community because the causes of unsustainable practices: over consumption, wasteful consumption, greenhouse gases emissions, improving built environment designing, and transport systems, involve decisions made by people.

Activities which involve students, especially as it is their future which will be affected, could be integrated with the ACT Sustainable Schools Initiative.

Strategies need to demonstrate connections in a creative way, involving the depth and breadth of knowledge in Canberra, as well as with our artists and performers. Recently, another project of the Nature and Society Forum has been to make some of these creative connections through Healthpact grants, linking living healthily and living sustainably.

Timeframe and viability of the proposed nomination

There is ample evidence that changes need to occur immediately for a more sustainable future, and promotion of sustainability initiatives inclusive of and across all sectors, through the ACT being a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is another way of implementing sustainability.

Submission by Wendy Rainbird,
a Coordinator of the Nature and Society Forum, Board Secretary of the Australian National Biocentre Inc and the Australian National Sustainability Initiative,
Coordinator of Farrer Ridge ParkCare, and Waterwatch volunteer.
4 April 2006.